Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

2005/ 2006
Business Plan

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Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

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Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

I am pleased to present the 2005-2006 Business Plan for Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. The plan describes priorities that are in line with the Government's broad objectives and the Department's commitment to making it easier for Nova Scotians to do business with government.

From upgrading water and wastewater facilities to building interchanges, the provincial government is honouring its commitment to improve infrastructure for all Nova Scotians. Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations has worked together with our federal and municipal partners to invest more than $201 million for 134 projects that will improve the health, vibrancy and prosperity of communities. The Department will continue to partner with the federal government and municipalities to invest in municipal infrastructure. Programs such as the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Program, Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund and the commitment of federal gas tax are complimentary programs directed at achieving this goal.

This March, the province's new land registration system, which will provide consumers with better access to land-related information and land owners with a guarantee of title, will be in place province- wide. The new land registration system modernizes Nova Scotia's 250 year old property-based system giving Nova Scotians, businesses and governments access to information and services that are the best in the world.

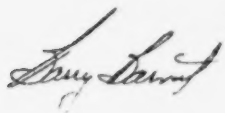
A notable development of 2004-2005 was highlighted in the Federal Government's announcing the sharing of federal gas tax revenue to assist municipalities in providing sustainable infrastructure. The Department is working with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities in preparing an allocation model for Nova Scotia municipalities for their share of the eventual revenues and the Department will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the allocation.

In support of the modernization of departmental programs and the reduction of red tape, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations will be issuing a discussion paper proposing amendments to the *Companies Act* to bring efficiencies in Registry of Joint Stock Companies' incorporation and registration processes. The Department will also continue to add to the number and function of online services during the year to further grow the number of electronic services offered to the Department's citizen and business customers.

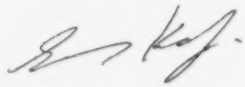
This coming year will be a busy and challenging one for us. Despite financial constraints, a priority for 2005-2006 will be a focus on the Province's French Services Language Plan. Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations has been selected to pilot this plan in partnership with the office of Acadian Affairs. The Department will be employing a strategy comprised of both recruitment of bilingual staff and french

language skills training for existing front line staff to offer more French services to Nova Scotians. First year priorities will be updating website content at the government and departmental level, translating commonly used forms and publications in French and hiring bilingual staff in the call centre and customer service offices in French communities.

I am confident that Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relation's committed staff will work with government and industry partners to meet the challenging priorities set out in the 2005-2006 Business Plan.



Honourable Barry Barnet
Minister



Greg Keefe, CMA
Deputy Minister

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

Introduction to the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations was formed on October 1, 2000 to be the lead service delivery arm of government for programs and services to businesses, individuals and municipalities. The Department is organized on a functional basis to facilitate the evolution in service delivery in a manner that will result in seamless delivery to customers in the most efficient manner possible.

Mandate

When SNSMR was created in 2000, it was mandated to become the single window service provider for government's services; provide quality service delivery with convenient access; reduce the amount of red tape on businesses and individuals through process streamlining; and, provide municipalities with a single access point to the Provincial Government.

This mandate requires the Department to make extensive investment in technology and process re-engineering to ensure its systems meet or exceed government and client expectations. In many service areas the Department has made significant advances in streamlining processes and efficiently improving customer service. Experience has proven that with careful planning, appropriate development time and the employment of technology, the Department can simultaneously achieve more effective and efficient service delivery.

Most of the investment to date has been attained through resource re-allocation and internal efficiencies. This is consistent with comments by the Auditor General of Nova Scotia who indicated that Government must improve its use of existing resources. While these options are always constrained, the Department will continue to explore alternatives and support initiatives that promote its mandate and objectives.

Responsibilities

The Department is responsible for ensuring results in the following areas:

- Effective and efficient policy development, enforcement and program management in the programs and services related to consumer protection, driver safety, taxation and business practices offered by the Department.
- Effective and efficient delivery of government programs and services to clients through in-person, phone, mail, and Internet service channels.
- The provision of local government related policy advice to government and quality advice, support, assistance and program delivery to Nova Scotia municipalities.
- The provision of a fair, equitable and defensible assessment roll.

- The provision of streamlined registration, licensing and permitting processes.
- Collaboration with internal and external partners to evaluate and improve the quality and effectiveness of government services.
- Policy development for Department in the area of data privacy, security and access and integrity of data holdings.
- Support Government's corporate strategy for e-government services, alternative program delivery and its corporate collections policy.
- Customer and stakeholder satisfaction with SNSMR services.
- Quality performance and morale of staff.
- Effective and positive relationships with other levels of government, provincial departments and agencies and the private sector.
- The provision of geographic information and associated technologies to support decision making by all provincial departments.
- Effective and efficient management of the Department's resources (financial, human, information technology, information)

Most of these responsibilities will be fulfilled via ongoing operations, through the services and programs identified in the Department's core business areas. However, a select few of these responsibilities have been identified for added emphasis over the next several years and represent the Strategic Goals (see page 14) that the Department will strive to achieve over the foreseeable future.

Organization

Currently the Department is in the process of re-organizing into four divisions:

- Program Management and Corporate Services
- Service Nova Scotia
- Municipal Services
- Assessment.

These divisions are discussed in more detail under the Core Business Areas section.

Core Business Areas

The Department's four core businesses are consistent with its four divisions with the exception of administrative and support services that have been removed from the discussion of the core businesses. The Department is organized on a matrix basis, meaning that it is organized around the function being performed such as service delivery or program management rather than on a sectoral or client basis. The

discussion below provides the major roles and functions (responsibilities) of each core business.

1. **Program Management and Corporate Services (PMCS)** - has responsibility for most of the programs offered by the Department. This includes strategic direction for the program, program development, enforcement and public awareness. The Division is also accountable for the related legislation, regulations and policies necessary for each program and for human resource support.

   Currently, major program areas and activities of this core business include the Provincial Tax Commission, Residential Tenancies, Corporate Collections, Consumer and Business Policy, Corporate Development, and Audit and Enforcement in several program areas.

   Benefits of these programs include a fairer and more efficient tax collection system, better consumer protection, more effective program management by the Department, improved compliance by business with licensing requirements, optimized revenue collection by the Department on behalf of government and other departments, and a healthier and safer workplace for Department employees.

   This core business supports the Department's Mission and Goals 3 and 4 by constantly improving the programs administered by SNSMR in a manner that is consistent with the public interest. It is also responsible for many of the human resource related initiatives.

2. **Service Nova Scotia (SNS)** - this Division was recently established to provide Nova Scotians with seamless one-window access to citizen and business-related government services. SNS is the government's service delivery arm and provides people and businesses of Nova Scotia with easy access to registration, licensing and data/information retrieval services while ensuring the integrity, security, and, where required, privacy of the data and information.

   The Service Delivery section of the Division is responsible for the Department Call Centre, Access Nova Scotia and Registry of Motor Vehicle offices across the province, along with managing the e-service channel. The Registry and Information Management Services section is responsible for registering and processing public records related to land, businesses and individuals. It also is responsible for the geographic information holdings of the Province and is the application and system owner of the Department's major databases. The Alternative Program Delivery unit of the Division is responsible for the development of partnerships to deliver services on behalf of other government departments and to manage arrangements with non-government agencies to deliver services on behalf of government. The Registry of Motor Vehicles and the Registry of Joint Stock Companies have also been transferred to the new Division from PMCS.

Benefits of the core business include easier access to an ever expanding number of information and other services offered by the Department on behalf of government. This is accomplished through either electronic or physical means which provide more timely responses to service requests and better quality service in terms of accessability of the information required. Other benefits from the operation of this core business include improved efficiency in the provision of registration and processing functions on behalf of Departmental programs and external program owners, enhanced integrity and security around the information holdings of the Department, improved quality of the data contained in the holdings, easier access to that information and increased ability to share data with other government departments and agencies.
This core business supports the Department's Mission and Goals 2, 3 and 4 by constantly striving to provide streamlined and easy access to quality, client centred services; continuously improving the registries and information holdings that support internal and external client services offered by SNSMR and by improving the security around those holdings; and, seeking alternate service delivery and infrastructure solutions that improve service and provide it in a more cost effective manner. It also contributes to the human resource initiatives of the Department.

3. **Municipal Services** - provides planning and advisory services related to municipal matters to the government and on behalf of the government to municipalities. The core business also operates many of the grant and other financial support programs offered to municipalities.

   Programs within the Division include advice and support to municipalities in the areas of administration and finance and land use planning. The Division also administers programs such as the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Program, the Community Accessibility Program and the Community Transportation Assistance Program.

   Benefits derived from this business unit include municipalities that are more effective in their governance role and their ability to provide services to citizens, that are more financially viable, and able to support development which will provide long term benefits to the entire province.

   This core business supports the Department Mission and Goals 1 and 4 by continuously improving advice, programs and other forms of assistance to promote municipal interests so that they may operate in a more effective and efficient manner. It also contributes to the human resource initiatives of the Department.

4. **Assessment Services** - Assessment Services is responsible for delivering an annual property assessment roll to each of the 55 municipalities in compliance with the *Assessment Act*. The property assessment roll provides municipalities with a reliable and stable basis to generate revenue to fund the services to its constituents, while the uniform assessment is used to

calculate municipal contributions towards education, corrections and the distribution of provincial grants to municipalities. Producing the assessment roll is integral to the interests and financial health of municipalities.

Legislation also requires assessment notices to be delivered annually to each property owner and to provide for an assessment appeal mechanism. The major activities in the assessment area include preparation of the annual assessment roll, a property inspection program, the new CAP Assessment Program, an appeal process, client relations and technology support.

Since 2001-2002 the Division has operated on a cost-recovery basis, with municipal units sharing the cost of its services. Effective January 2005, Assessment Services now reports to an Interim Management Board of municipal representatives. In addition to assuming authority and responsibility for all decisions affecting the delivery of assessment services for a period of 18 months, the Interim Management Board will also make recommendations to the Minister for a new governance and service delivery model for Assessment Services.

The Assessment section provides municipalities with a reliable and stable basis to generate revenue to fund the services required by the citizens of municipal units.

This core business contributes to the Department's Mission and Goals 1 and 4 by producing the assessment roll that is integral to the interests of municipalities and their financial health as well as contributing to the human resource initiatives of the Department.

Vision

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations is a recognized and modeled service organization - our pro-active stance and value-added contributions are well understood both within the provincial government and externally by citizens and businesses across Nova Scotia. Our quality and cost performance set us apart from comparable providers. Citizens can obtain any service at one of our accessible centers and our on-line presence is proven and comparable to peer agencies anywhere. We've been a catalyst in fostering seamless access to all levels of government and in migrating from paper to electronic services.

The public interest is core to our legislative mandate. Clients are confident that public records are safe, reliable and easy to access, and municipalities are pleased with our client-focused relationship. Staff recognize their Department as an employer of choice because we have a proven track record for developing people and providing the technology and other tools that support their ability to deliver quality service. Service is our business.

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

Mission

To provide Nova Scotians with seamless, easy access to numerous government services in a cost-effective manner while maintaining the interests of the public and municipalities.

Planning Context

Various factors must be considered before the Department formulates its medium term direction. First and foremost are the priorities of the Government. Then there are internal and external issues within the environment in which the Department operates that must be considered and addressed in the plan. Each of these factors plays a role in molding the actions the Department will take over the medium term.

The planning environment for the Department in 2005-2006 can be described rather succinctly - the environment in which the Department operates has not changed sufficiently over the past year to warrant any major changes in mandate or direction. For example, Government's strategic goals remain the same as last year. Customers still demand improved service. The legislative and infrastructure framework in which the Department operates continues to require modernization. Many of the human resource issues that SNSMR has experienced in the past, continue. On the other hand, some important factors have changed which present either an opportunity or challenge to the Department to depart from its usual course of business. The major factors and changes that have occurred in the Department's operating environment are discussed in more detail below.

Priorities of Government

Perhaps the most important factor the Department must consider in developing its plan are the strategic goals of the Government. Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations plays a key role in the implementation of the goals and priorities of the Nova Scotia Government. All the programs and services offered by the Department contribute in one way or another to the priorities of the Government. The strategic goals identified by the Department must also support, promote and be consistent with the priorities of the Government.

The Government has taken a "stay the course" direction for the upcoming year and will continue to promote five priorities for planning purposes. These priorities are:

- Education
- Health and Healthcare
- Building Greater Prosperity
- Protecting What Nova Scotians Value

- Seniors
- Families and Nova Scotians in need
- Environment
- Cultural diversity
- Consumer protection/insurance
- Safer communities/streets

Each of the actions that the Department takes in support of its key client groups and responsibilities also assist Government's priorities. Support is provided to the business community by promoting a more level playing field for all current and potential new businesses. A prime focus for SNSMR activity is to streamline business interactions with government and to make it easier for businesses to operate in the province. The less time, effort and money that business has to spend on its regulatory obligations the more resources it has to invest, create jobs and seek out opportunities for growth. Efforts to reduce red tape therefore support government's priority related to prosperity.

These actions must be balanced against the need for consumer protection. The Department provides numerous services directly to consumers to assist them in their dealings with the business sector. Better consumer awareness, for example, protects consumers from unscrupulous operators, provides wider consumer selection and informs consumers as to where they can purchase goods or services at the lowest possible price. These actions in turn provide the consumer with a belief in a fair and balanced economic system and the confidence to make purchases from local or international suppliers, thus promoting both prosperity as well as consumer protection.

Another major component of the Department's operations are composed of back office transactions, never seen by the consuming public, that support the programs and services offered to businesses and consumers. The providers of these services are constantly exploring more convenient, easier and less expensive means by which the Department can deliver its services. Through improvements such as technical enhancements, they are contributing to lowering the cost of running the Department and to Government's priority for fiscal responsibility. Many of theses behind-the-scenes activities will form the main thrust of the Department's priorities for the medium term.

Initiatives undertaken in cooperation with municipalities will make Nova Scotia communities more healthy and vibrant. Provincial funding for municipal infrastructure will help to provide the physical capacity to support new growth and improve the environment in our communities. Funding for programs and projects which are designed to facilitate the provision of more and better facilities and services will assist communities to be safer and to help those individuals who are most in need with support.

Other Environmental Factors

Besides the Government's priorities, many other key factors within the environment that SNSMR operates must be considered in medium term planning. Most of these have not changed significantly over the past few years. Service levels and satisfaction remain very high, higher than many comparable service providers. That having been said, success breeds higher expectations from our customers. They demand more, meaning faster, more accessible or higher quality service through the Department's multiple delivery channels.

To keep customer satisfaction levels high, better access is key. Access can mean many things including finding the right information about a program or service, the closest service location or the correct forms and instructions for completion. Beyond access, timely service, knowledgeable and courteous staff who go the extra mile to help clients, fair treatment and a successful outcome remain as the key ingredients of service excellence. These five components of service delivery strongly influence client satisfaction and they are the most important factors from the customers perspective. Thus, both SNSMR's processes and the skills of the people who operate them must be constantly upgraded to meet the higher service standards expected by our clients.

The general outlook for the Province's 55 municipal partners has not changed much over the past year. Many municipalities have the capacity to respond to emerging issues and the medium term outlook is relatively bright. Yet for some other local governments, the future appears more daunting. Issues of financial viability, population loss and an aging population in some municipal units, discussed in some detail in last year's plan, have not gone away. High property values reflected in assessments will be an issue once again for many municipal taxpayers and their respective local government leaders. Innovative solutions and some tough choices will have to be made at all levels of government to address these persistent challenges.

Changes in the Environment

One key change that will have a significant impact on the Department's operations is Government legislation to provide french language services. The purpose of this legislation is to contribute to the preservation and growth of the Acadian and francophone community. To achieve this initiative, departments are to determine what services are currently offered in french and what else should be offering in french. Based on this information, departments are requested to develop a plan and outline activities over the next five years that will contribute to the development and maintenance of french-language services.

Budgets are key to any government organization being able to deliver on its mandate. This is as true

today as it has been in the past. Unlike the recent past, however, the current budget outlook for the Department is more positive than at this time last year. Recent developments indicate that Government may enter the new fiscal year on a more sound financial footing. This means the Department will not have to deal with budget cuts, and in fact it has received limited additional funding to support the new ideas, technologies and initiatives that will improve the level of service to its customers, further protect consumers and assist its municipal partners. This is a dramatic change and provides for a much more optimistic outlook ent ing into the new fiscal year.

It was also interesting to note during the planning stages for the upcoming fiscal year the number of unplanned activities, with significant budget implications, that the Department was requested from various stakeholders to undertake and deliver upon during the 2004-2005 fiscal year. These were new activities that had not been anticipated during the planning stages of the past fiscal year. The Department welcomes these new challenges because they represent a vote of confidence by our key stakeholders in the "can do" attitude of the Department and its ability to deliver on major new tasks. On the other hand, they represent significant additional work for the limited resources that must perform the on-going duties of the Department each year.

Human Resource Issues

Human resources are also critical to the Department meeting its mandate. The Department continues to maintain good staff relations with over 72% of staff expressing satisfaction with their jobs at SNSMR. Given the number of staff who will be eligible to retire, succession planning presents a formidable challenge for the Department in filling positions with the required expertise. The issue is particularly acute in the information technology area where the Department faces stiff competition for skilled and experienced knowledge workers. The Department is also thinly staffed in some key areas. It has many highly skilled people in its various positions, however, those skills must be continuously developed to match the evolving needs of the Department and its clients. And as witnessed in a number of cases, there is strong competition for certain skill sets needed in the Department. Innovative ways will have to be developed to find and hold the people the Department needs.

The transitions in the Department workforce brought about by retirements, resignations and reassignments, etc. are not viewed only as a challenge, they also represent an opportunity for the Department. Properly coordinated and thought-out staff succession planning will allow the Department to develop the skill sets that will be needed to fulfill its mandate over the next decade and provide opportunities for employees within the Department.

In summary, the environment in which the Department operates has, with a few exceptions, remained largely unchanged. The Department has used the period of relative stability to identify a few, yet

challenging initiatives that will address the persistent issues outlined above. The next year will be spent further developing these initiatives and to start moving on their implementation. Resolving these issues will take many years. The goals are set at least for the medium term (four years out) and the initiatives are also longer term in nature, although significant progress will be made in each year that they are pursued.

Strategic Goals

Within its major areas of responsibility the Department has identified a select number of goals that it will pursue over the medium term period of four years. They have been selected to promote government's priorities and to address strategic areas that should be enhanced. They are similar in many ways to the goals of the past in large part because our business remains much the same. However, the goals have been modified to capture the essence of what the Department wants to achieve over the medium term. In addition, they strike an important balance between improving service delivery, a key function of the Department, yet protecting the privacy of the information holdings of the Department and the integrity of the programs for which the Department is responsible. The department will not compromise privacy and integrity for the sake of better service or operational efficiency.

1. Partner with municipalities to promote effective local government and healthy and vibrant communities.

2. Improve accessibility and quality of government services in a cost-effective manner, while maintaining security, integrity and accuracy of records/data.

3. Modernise Departmental programs and infrastructure to support citizen-centred service models and to address emerging issues.

4. Provide a motivating work environment and develop staff to meet current and future Departmental needs.

Priorities

For 2005-2006, the Department has taken a more strategic approach in the number of priorities that it will pursue over the medium term. These are strategic or high level initiatives that will change the nature of the way the Department deals with its customers and stakeholders. The priorities are grouped by the strategic goal to which they are most closely linked, although some could also fit under another related goal.

These initiatives will take several years to realize. Having identified these initiatives and their major components during the past year, it is now time to plan and develop the way in which the desired direction will be put into practice. Thus in some cases more work will be required before actual implementation can take place. In other instances, the initial planning and development has largely been completed and implementation will begin in either pilot form or through a full roll out across the Department. In addition, due to the importance of human resources to the success of the Department, major initiatives related to that service are included in the SNSMR Business Plan.

Goal 1 - Partnering with Municipalities
Three initiatives have been identified to develop a long term framework for municipal infrastructure investment.

Implement and Monitor Gas Tax Revenue Transfers

The Federal Government has announced that it is going to share a percentage of the federal gas tax to assist municipalities in providing sustainable infrastructure. Although the details of the program have yet to be anmnounced, Ottawa has stated that the money will begin to flow in 2005-2006 and will reach five cents a litre within five years. The money will reach municipalities through bilateral arrangements between the provinces and the federal government.

SNSMR is working with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities in preparing an allocation model for Nova Scotia municipalities for their share of the eventual revenues and the Department will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the allocation.

Report on Provincial Funding to Complement External Infrastructure Funding

The Department will investigate options for sourcing provincial funds over the long term to compliment federal and municipal investments in municipal and community infrastructure . Various options will be explored and a report complete with recommendations will be made available for the Minister's consideration.

The options reviewed will have to take into account the anticipated level of federal funding that will be directed towards municipal/community infrastructure in the province over the next few years and into the future.

Establish a Life Cycle Management Framework

The Department will establish a life cycle management framework for use in determining and planning long term investment needs for municipal infrastructure in Nova Scotia. The framework will take into account the full life cycle costs associated with municipal infrastructure and could include a benefit-cost analysis approach to establishing priorities for capital infrastructure investments within individual municipalities and the province overall.

The framework or model will be established in fiscal year 2005-2006. It will be introduced as one tool or component of a larger system for municipal/community infrastructure management. The proposed system will also involve an improved approach to municipal infrastructure inventory management, which the department is currently working towards with the Municipal Public Works Association of Nova Scotia (MPWANS). This will be a multi-year project, with the life cycle management framework being established in the first year.

Goal 2 - Improving Government Services

SNSMR is the service delivery arm of government and provides a public face to government. The Department, through its Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) divisions (RIMS, Service Delivery and APD), has responsibility for providing citizens and businesses with one-window, easy and secure access to government services and information. In order to provide these services and access to information, ISD maintains a large technical infrastructure to provide a vast array of services to members of the public and to businesses. Just like roads, buildings, bridges and other types of infrastructure maintained by government, SNSMR's technology infrastructure is aging and in continuous need of either replacement, upgrading or expansion to meet the changing needs of our clients. Four priorities have been identified to promote the goal of improved access and quality of government services.

Integrated Service Delivery Plan

SNSMR is the service delivery arm of government and provides the public with a wide range of programs and services through its network of offices, telephone call centre, and website. The Department is moving forward to improve the integration of its service delivery systems and processes through development of a strategic plan.

The plan will provide a roadmap for making further improvements in the delivery of service to Nova Scotians, and will strengthen the Department's role as a service provider for government programs. The plan will address the organization, service standards, channel integration, facilities, human resources, business processes, and technology.
The planning phase is expected to be completed in the first half of fiscal 2005-2006, and

implementation will follow in the second half of the fiscal year, and continue into 2006-2007. The strategic plan for integrated service delivery will be an important input into the sustainable funding plan. as described below.

Integrated Service Delivery Funding

Once the integrated service delivery plan is approved, funding for the plan must be secured. ISD will take the lead over the next two years in establishing a sustainable funding model to support ongoing technology requirements. This will permit SNSMR to achieve medium to longer term benefits such as the next phase of online services, improved security and cost savings from internal efficiencies. In 2005-2006, ISD will explore all opportunities to secure sustainable funding to support its vision for integrated service delivery, including partnerships, marketing, and cost recovery models.

Continue to Evolve the Department's e-Service Strategy

The evolution of major e-government initiatives for SNSMR can be captured by the following key strategies: growth, promotion, integration and partnerships. SNSMR will continue to add to the number and function of online services during the year to further grow the number of electronic services offered to the Department's citizen and business customers. Some of the applications expected to be implemented or evaluated for implementation are used vehicle tax inquiry, vehicle history package and an enhanced driver insurance abstract service. In addition, the e-Service function will play an integral part in the Department's implementation of french language services by introducing bi-lingual capabilities to the SNSMR website and select online services.
The Department has developed a strong baseline of online services and needs to further promote the existing services to potential customers as part of a strategic effort to further develop use of the online service channel. A promotional strategy will be developed to support the growth of customer usage of e-services, as well as initial communications and advertising initiatives to support the strategy.

SNSMR offers a wide array of online services today to citizens and businesses. The need to further integrate these services with department databases and processes is growing as the usage and acceptance of online services increases. The Department will investigate, develop and implement improved integration of online services to maximize the customer convenience and efficiency of service. This will include enhancements to existing citizen services such as vehicle permit renewal and fine payments, as well as business services available through the Nova Scotia Business Registry and others.

To achieve the maximum benefit to its customers, SNSMR works extensively with key stakeholder

groups such as other provincial departments and municipalities. The Department will continue to develop partnerships to deliver on its electronic service delivery vision. This will be accomplished by continuing to partner on initiatives with departments and organizations for online business services such as those offered through the Nova Scotia Business Registry. Existing partnerships for citizen service delivery initiatives involving the Community Access Program (Office of Economic Development) and provincial libraries (Education) will be continued and enhanced to offer an increased number of services through collaborative and joint investment activities. Municipalities will continue to be a key focus of the Department's e-Service strategy and partnership opportunities will be pursued to assist municipal units with their own e-Government initiatives.

French Language Services Plan

The *French Language Services Act* empowers Government to designate departments as having an obligation to provide french language services. Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations is committed to identifying and implementing areas feasible for provision of French Language services. A Plan has been developed to implement french language services within the Department over the next five years. Priority will initially be given to implementation of french language services at frontline service locations within Acadian communities, within the Department's Call Centre and online.

Subject to appropriate budget funding, targets for 2005-2006 will include:

1. Establish a bilingual French Language Service Coordinator.
2. Establish French Language website content at the Government and Department level, working in collaboration with Communications Nova Scotia.
3. Establish French Language Service in the Call Centre.
4. Establish or enhance French Language Service in existing customer service offices in French communities.
5. Provide commonly used forms and publications in French.

The Department does not currently have a sufficient number of staff with french language skills to achieve the stated targets; therefore, the Department will be employing a strategy comprised of both recruitment of bilingual staff and french language skills training (where appropriate) for existing staff.

Goal 3 - Modernize Departmental Programs

Consumer Protection

A number of initiatives will be undertaken in the consumer protection field to enhance that service. The Department will continue working in collaboration with industry associations to review the framework for motor vehicle dealer licensing in the province. A detailed assessment of the regulations applying to motor vehicle dealers has been completed and consultations with dealers on proposed changes have been held. The next steps will involve reaching agreement on the changes to present to government.

Amendments will be made to reporting requirements relating to deposits to trust accounts for pre-need cemetery and funeral services purchases.. Amendments will also be considered to the disclosure requirements that apply to extensions of credit when a collateral mortgage is used as security. The audit coverage of trust accounts will also be augmented. Consumer information guides on major areas of complaint, such as automobiles and collection agencies, will be prepared or updated. More resources will be allocated for tobacco compliance inspections and investigations as well as tobacco refunds from break and enter thefts of tobacco outlets. Several technology investments will also be made to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the audit activities of the Department.

Improving Security and Authentication

SNSMR has emphasized the improvement to delivery of government services through e-service initiatives while recognizing the challenges of ensuring the security and privacy of the confidential information it maintains. To achieve the efficiencies of an e-service business model, full end-to-end integration of the client interface with back-end databases is required. The uptake by citizens and businesses will depend to a large extent on their confidence in the effectiveness of the security of their confidential information.

The Department has developed an Authentication/Trust Level Framework which determines the degree of certainty necessary to establish the real-world identity of clients using specific e-services. The degree of certainty is directly related to the confidentiality of the transaction. The framework also recommends specific security technologies necessary to establish the required trust levels. For those transactions which require a higher degree of identity rigor than username/password credentials provide, digital certificate technologies are necessary. The Department plans to assess all new projects using the Authentication Framework, and evaluate the Federal Government's Secure Channel/E-Pass digital certificate service via an appropriate proof-of-concept project.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a dynamic, team-based management process designed to help with management decision-making. It involves the development and use of non-financial, numerical indicators (measures) by which actual results can be measured, monitored and evaluated against set goals or targets. The process includes changing procedures or activities within a program in a systematic basis to improve service and meet the established goals and targets. Benefits to programs that are engaged in the quality assurance process include increased focus on customer service, reduction of waste, increased product/service quality and increased customer satisfaction. A number of these benefits are directly linked to the quality and modernization objectives outlined in the Department's strategic goals.

The quality assurance process requires that both management and staff be trained in the techniques necessary to develop and implement quality improvement initiatives, data collection methodologies and evaluation and analysis tools. The Corporate Development unit of the Department will lead and facilitate the quality assurance process across the entire Department by the end of the fiscal year 2008-2009. This will require the training and development of quality assurance teams in all appropriate program areas over the next several years.

In 2005-2006 it is anticipated that training and pilot projects will be completed in two program areas. This will demonstrate the quality assurance process and will permit evaluation of the training and implementation methodologies enabling any necessary adjustments to be made prior to roll-out across the entire Department.

Goal 4 - Human Resource Initiatives

The Human Resource unit of SNSMR has developed an phased succession management process involving the identification of key positions and upcoming retirements, the skills required in those key positions and calls for the identification of two possible successors with the competencies necessary for the position. It also includes the development of plans and strategies for knowledge transfer to the potential successors. This process will be approved by management in the upcoming year and then implemented.

The primary tool, or foundation, for any succession management strategy is performance management. There is currently a formal framework (tool) in place for the Department's MCP employees, incorporating development plans. A similar platform for performance management for our Bargaining Unit employees is also available but has not been adopted to the extent as is the case at the MCP level.
These tools facilitate the preparation of preliminary profiles for all employees, including candidates with potential as well as consistent performers. Development plans are then created for those

designated as potential successors.

Within performance management, development activity for both MCP and bargaining unit employees is a dynamic process that will require substantial investment by the Department in order to achieve its stated objective. Several electronic tools are available to assist in capturing and analyzing employee development potential. In addition, a corporate eLearning Management System is targeted for implementation in May, 2005. This tool will be a vehicle for skills identification and management (gap analysis) and will augment self-development activity for employees.

Additional programs which enhance the work environment and which will be initiated for the upcoming fiscal year are Wellness and Employee Recognition projects. In addition, the third employee survey will be conducted early in the new fiscal year. Analysis of the results and divisional action plans to resolve outstanding issues will be developed shortly thereafter.

Several initiatives will be undertaken in the area of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS). An OHS survey of staff, managers and committees will be conducted in 2005-2006 from which training gaps will be identified and to further increase awareness of the program. A Hazard Evaluation System will be incorporated into the Department's OHS manual with the expectation that managers will implement the system in conformity with OHS Act. Lastly, an ergonomic self-assessment survey for all staff and management will be developed during the year to determine the extent of related physical ailments occurring in the Department due to office configurations.

Budget Context

SNSMR - Estimated Budget Expenditures			
	2004/05 Estimate (Per 2004\05 Estimates Book)	2004/05 Forecast (Per 2005\06 Estimates Book)	2005/06 Budget (Per 2005\06 Estimates Book)
	$ Thousands	$ Thousands	$ Thousands
Total Program Expenses - Gross Current	132,114.0	141,746.0	142,208.0
Net Program Expenses - Net of Recoveries	92,352.0	101,624.0	96,384.0
TCA Cash Flow	1,304.5	1,686.8	2,364.0
Salaries & Benefits	42,024.0	41,311.0	45,621.0
Funded Staff (FTEs) - Gross	885.2	829.8	905.1
Funded Staff (FTEs) - Net	722.8	677.8	739.2

Performance Measures

The Department presents the items it expects to achieve over the medium term in two ways, a narrative outline of its priorities (discussed in some detail on pages 16 to 19) and a quantitative representation of its desired results using performance measures. These measures are presented in the tables that follow.

The Department attempts to quantify as many of its program objectives and operational procedures as it can. It is often clearer and easier for the user to gauge progress when various mileposts are quantified. Some of the array of measures monitored by the Department are reported in documents such as this Plan, others are kept for internal management purposes only.

The following templates provide the major outcomes, measures, data, targets and strategies for each of the Department's strategic goals that will be monitored by the Department over the medium term. As the four year business planning cycle has started over beginning in 2005-2006, most of the outcomes, measures, etc. are different from the previous information provided in these tables in prior

years. In addition, the Department has changed its focus for the measures from its core businesses to its strategic goals, thus further necessitating the change in the measures. To ensure continuity of the process in the future, SNSMR will attempt to monitor as many of these same measures as possible, until the target date. However, as the measurement process continues to evolve, revised or even new measures may be added over time. As this is the first year of a new cycle, base year data (usually 2003-2004 data unless noted otherwise) will be provided. Actual data for 2005-2006 will be provided in the accountability report for that year, due by December 2006. In most cases, the target year and target data will be as of 2008-2009, unless stated otherwise.

Department Business Plan 2005/06

Departmental Goal	Measure	Data (most recent)	Target 2008/09	Strategies to Achieve Target
A. Partner with municipalities to promote effective local government and healthy vibrant communities.	# of municipalities with by-laws that protect drinking water supplies	NA	Year-over-year increase based on 2003/04 baseline data	- develop long term framework for municipal infrastructure investment including a allocation strategy for gas tax revenue transfers, a new infrastructure investment program (focused on green projects) and establish a life cycle management framework.
	# of new partnership initiatives that promote effective local government	NA	Year-over-year increase based on 2003/04 baseline data	
	# of direct contribution agreements that promote healthy & vibrant communities	NA	Year-over-year increase based on 2003/04 baseline data	

Departmental Goal	Measure	Data (most recent)	Target 2008/09	Strategies to Achieve Target
B. Improve accessibility and quality of government services in a cost-effective manner, while maintaining security, integrity and accuracy of records/data.	Client satisfaction rating	2003/04 90%	90%	- develop a plan for integrated service delivery, a funding model for the plan and an integrated e-service strategy - implement a french language services plan in select areas of the Department starting with front-line services in french communities and at the Call Centre
	Change in Cost per Transaction (RMV, Business Registry and Land Registry)	Being developed	Year-over-year decline based on baseline data	
	Change in % Transactions performed on-line	Being developed	Year-over-year increase from baseline data	
	# new applications put on-line each year	Being developed	Year-over-year increase based on 2003/04 data	
	% required departmental infrastructure funded each year	NA	100%	

Departmental Goal	Measure	Data (most recent)	Target 2008/09	Strategies to Achieve Target
C Modernize departmental programs and infrastructure to support citizen-centred models and to address emerging issues	# of identified Legislative Impediments removed	NA	TBD	- pilot quality assurance process in two programs, evaluate and then roll out to remainder of programs.
	# of Legislation/Regulations reviewed	Being developed	TBD	- develop a plan for improving security and implement authentication framework
	% of prioritized IT list of impediments removed	Being developed	TBD	- review reporting requirements in the funeral services industry and review framework for motor vehicle dealers program
	# of programs that implement QA Process	NA	100%	- completion of proof-of-concept project by end of 2005/06 and if positive, further roll-out is expected thereafter

Departmental Goal	Measure	Data (most recent)	Target 2008/09	Strategies to Achieve Target
D. Provide a motivating work environment and develop staff to meet current and future departmental needs	average score in job satisfaction question in employee survey results	2003/04 54% re Work Environment 58% re Training and Development	70% Work Environment 85% Training & Development	- implement succession management plan for identified key positions in Department - expand implementation of performance management process in MCPs and bargaining units - undertake employee survey, analyze results by division and develop action plans - undertake several OHS related initiatives including conducting an employee survey, implementing a hazard evaluation system and an ergonomic analysis
	% of staff who have (a) annual performance plans on file and (b) have participated in one-on-one performance discussions with their direct supervisor by end of first quarter of the fiscal year, and, (c) completing and following through on formal training plans.	NA	100%	
	% of positions identified as needing succession planning that have plans in place	2004/05 0% of 240 positions	50%	